



## Madison Buffalo Jump State Park Indian Education For All Lesson

### Title

The Buffalo Jump: An ancient technology used by the Salish<sup>1</sup> and other Northern Plains Indian<sup>2</sup> tribes to kill large numbers of buffalo for food, shelter, clothing, tools, and other uses.

### Content Area(s)

Social Studies; Media Literacy; Technology

### Grade level

8th

### Duration

5.0 class periods: 1.0 for Social Studies instruction; 0.5 for Media Literacy instruction (Internet; Library); 0.5 for Technology instruction (Microsoft PowerPoint); and 3.0 for assessment (NOTE: assessment consists of a 5-minute PowerPoint presentation by students; allow for seven-eight presentations per 50-minute class period. While this lesson plan may seem to be too time consuming, refer below to the large number of Content Standards this lesson plan addresses.)

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Sun Buffalo Cow ran very fast along the other trail to the top of the cliff. She said, "I go into [change to] the form of earth buffalo. *I will be meat for my Salish.*" She jumped headlong from the high rock to the foot of the cliff.

The people came and saw the dead buffalo. They said: "Our Mother spoke true words. Here is herd buffalo fallen from the rock. It is warm meat. It is good."

From "Sun Buffalo Cow Sacrificed Her Life"  
Told by Lassaw Redhorn, Francois Skyenna and Dominic Michell

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<sup>1</sup> While no cultural artifacts affiliated with the Salish people have been found at Madison Buffalo Jump (MBJ), archaeologists and historians seem to agree that they occupied, or otherwise used, the resources of the Three Forks and Logan areas for as many as a few thousand years before 1700 C.E (current era). However, the Shoshone, now with reservations in Idaho and Wyoming, were also ancient and historical users and occupiers of the area and archaeologists surmise that they also used the MBJ, as did the Nez Perce (now with a reservation in Idaho), and other Montana tribes such as Blackfeet, Crow, and Pend d' Oreille.

<sup>2</sup> During prehistoric and historic times, the Salish lived in both the Plateau and Northern Plains American Indian Cultural Areas. With regard to buffalo hunting, Salish used technologies similar to tribes living solely on the Plains.

## **Goals (Montana Standards/Essential Understandings)**

**Essential Understanding 6:** History is a story and most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. Histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from an Indian perspective conflicts with what most of mainstream history tells us.

**Social Studies Content Standard 4:** Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships.

**Social Studies Content Standard 3:** Students apply geographic knowledge and skills (e.g., location, place, human/environment interactions, movement, and regions).

**Science Content Standard 3:** Students demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

**Library Media Content Standard 1:** Students understand an inquiry process including how to access, evaluate and use information.

**Technology Content Standard 6:** Students apply technological abilities and knowledge to construct new personal understanding.

## **Overview**

In this lesson, students use the natural and cultural resources of the Madison Buffalo Jump State Park (MBJ), near Logan, Montana, to explore (1) the 4,000-year use of MBJ by indigenous<sup>3</sup> people; (2) the significance of the buffalo in Salish culture; (3) ecology of MBJ, which is common to hundreds of other jumps on the Northern Plains, particularly its physical geography and plant life, and why buffalo, thence Salishes and native people, were attracted; and (4) the impact of the animals' near extermination on Salish and other Plains Indian cultures

For the Salish and other Plains Indians, the buffalo was the staff of life, on which they were very much dependent. Buffalo existed in the millions on the Northern Plains, perhaps as many as 30 million. Indian people used every part of the buffalo. Examples include, skins for robes, tipi coverings, and bedding; hooves for glue; horns for spoons; bones for tools; sinews for thread and string; flesh for food; the skull for spiritual ceremonies; and manure for fuel.

The process by which large numbers of buffalo were killed at jumps like the one at MBJ consisted of five elements, or parts: (1) a grazing area where herds of buffalo accumulated naturally; (2) drive lanes resembling a funnel of "dead men" (e.g., piles of rock, bushes, and/or hazing people) to channel the buffalo from the grazing area to the cliff's edge; (3) the cliff, itself, over which the buffalo jumped; (4) slopping ground at the foot of the cliff, allowing people to finish killing surviving buffalo, and begin initial butchering; and (5) a camping site with a water source nearby, and some distance (several hundred yards) from the butchering area where the hunters and their families completed

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<sup>3</sup> In this lesson plan, indigenous, native, Native American, American Indian, and Indian are synonymous.

processing the meat, e.g., principally, cutting the meat into strips for drying and storage for later use.

## Materials or Resources Needed

- The book: Whealdon, Bon I., et al, and Robert Bigart, Editor. *"I Will Be Meat for My Salish."* Pablo, Montana: Salish Kootenai College Press; and Helena, Montana: Montana Historical Society Press, 2001: 21-66
- Interpretive Sign Narrative at MBJ web site:  
[http://fwp.mt.gov/lands/site\\_281935.aspx](http://fwp.mt.gov/lands/site_281935.aspx)
- Student notebooks, pencils/pens, paper, classroom board
- Computers, Internet, Microsoft PowerPoint software, PowerPoint projector, computer discs
- Internet access to one of more of the following websites. The purpose of accessing these websites is to inform students of the hunting and use of buffalo in Northern Plains' native cultures. Some of the information is specific to Blackfeet and Crow buffalo procurement and usage, but the information is general to various peoples of the Northern Plains:
  - Chief Plenty Coups State Park Electronic Field Trip. "Bison: Their influence on the cultures of the plains." URL:  
<http://www.plentycoups.org/educate/home.html>
  - University of Montana Lifelong Learning Project. "Buffalo Hunt," *The Blackfeet*. URL: <http://www.trailtribes.org/greatfalls/home.htm>
  - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. "American Bison": Website URL:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_Bison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Bison)
  - Dreyer, Susan L. "Linked Destiny: The Buffalo and the Plains Indians," (a media rich lesson plan). URL:  
<http://www.homepage.montana.edu/~mtpbs/Education/NTTILessonPlans2/LittleBighorn/BHLinkedDestiny.pdf>
- Peer and Teacher Assessment Rubric and MBJ In-Class Discussion Work Sheet (teachers make copies of each and distribute to students, see below)

## Activities and Procedures

### Social Studies

Before class students read "MBJ Interpretive Signs Document." (Download from the Madison Buffalo Jump State Park – Montana FWP website:

[http://fwp.mt.gov/lands/site\\_281935.aspx](http://fwp.mt.gov/lands/site_281935.aspx)

Students write on their worksheets, responding to the following prompts by the teacher (see below, **Madison Buffalo Jump In-Class Discussion Work Sheet**).

- What is a buffalo jump, and when and where was it used?
- What are the five ecological (e.g., environmental, geographical, geological, biological) components common to most buffalo jumps?
- Why was the buffalo important to Plains Indians?
- What did its near extermination mean for the Salish and other Plains tribes?"

After a few minutes, discuss the questions as a class and record students' answers to each question on the board.

Example: Buffalo Jumps student answers' listing rubric (teacher writes heads of rubric on board; dotted lists are general answers the teacher is looking for, but prompts students for answers, and then writes them on the board)

What, where, when	Five components	Importance	Near extermination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jumps used to kill large numbers of buffalo</li> <li>• Northern Plains—a vast grazing “pasture”</li> <li>• Primarily before horse/gun</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural grazing area</li> <li>• drive lane</li> <li>• cliff</li> <li>• killing/gross butchering area</li> <li>• campsite w/ water for processing meat, hides, bones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• food</li> <li>• shelter</li> <li>• tools</li> <li>• clothing</li> <li>• religious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how—over hunting</li> <li>• who—students express opinions</li> <li>• change for Indian people—students offer opinions</li> </ul>

After several minutes of discussion, review the questions and revise the answers listed on the board as needed.

For the remainder of class, divide students into small groups. Each group is given a selection to read from (that is, all the members of one group read the same selection), *“I Will Be Meat for My Salish,”* pp. 21-66. Give the students about ten minutes to read the selection, then pose the following questions:

- What were the Salish rules regarding the killing of buffalo?
- Do you think very much of a buffalo killed at a jump was wasted?
- How much, in pounds, of a buffalo was used?
- What are some of the uses of buffalo that we have not listed already?
- After the coming of the white traders into Indian country, what was the role of trade in buffalo hunting?
- How did killing buffalo for trade change the nature of the hunt?
- What are some of the “morals” of “Buffalo Legends?”
- What happened to the buffalo, and who was responsible?

### Media Literacy

Per instruction of Librarian or the Social Studies teacher, students will visit the websites listed above in the “Materials” section.

### Technology

Students will receive instruction in the use of PowerPoint from the Technology or Social Studies teacher.

### Assessment

Students will give an oral presentation on the following topic: “Primarily, the buffalo jump was used by Salish and other Plains Indians before the introduction by the Spanish of the horse and gun. Describe what took place at a buffalo jump before, during, and after the buffalo were killed. What are your thoughts concerning this process?”

Students will be assigned to peruse at least one of the online materials resources listed above in “Materials and Resources Needed,” and prepare a five-minute PowerPoint (about six slides). They will be graded on the quality of their visual presentation format; factual knowledge of their topic; their adherence to federal copyright laws in citing text, pictures, and graphics; and elocution.

Students will use one slide of their PPT to cite the references they used in an accepted format, APA or Chicago Style, or other style favored by the teacher.

Students will evaluate each other students' presentations, which will be taken in consideration by the teacher in awarding final project grades (see below, **Peer and Teacher Oral Presentation Assessment Rubric**).

### **Extensions**

1. Students explore prehistoric and history buffalo use by Salishes, and compare and contrast Yellowstone National Park's contemporary policy regarding "trespassing" buffalo leaving the Park.
2. Students visit Madison Buffalo Jump State Park and receive a tour and presentation by the Interpretive Specialist. The presentation will include:
  - a. The prehistory of the jump;
  - b. An overview of the Salish use of buffalo jumps and their specific history use of the geography of the Jefferson River Valley and the Three Forks area;
  - c. An overview of the jump's environmental technology; and
  - d. A tour of campsite area, showing tipi rings, and other evidence of indigenous peoples' use.

### **Online Materials and Teaching Aids**

Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Official Website:  
<http://www.cskt.org/about/index.htm>

Montana Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council. URL: <http://www.mtwytlc.com/>

Salish Kootenai College. "Tribal History." URL: <http://www.skcc.edu/>

### Peer and Teacher Oral Presentation Assessment Rubric

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Presenter's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Oral Presentation Rubric	Possible Points	Peer-Assessment	Teacher Assessment
Provided depth in coverage of topic.	10		
Presentation was well planned and coherent	10		
PPT frames were well formatted	10		
Provided personal beliefs in a thoughtful manner	10		
Provided bibliographic information	10		
Adhered to federal copyright laws in citing sources of information	10		
<b>Total Possible Points</b>	<b>60</b>		

Rate each category according to the following scale: 9-10 = excellent, 7-8 = very good, 5-6 = good, 3-4 = satisfactory, 1-2 = poor, and 0 = unsatisfactory.

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### Peer and Teacher Oral Presentation Assessment Rubric

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Presenter's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Oral Presentation Rubric	Possible Points	Peer-Assessment	Teacher Assessment
Provided depth in coverage of topic	10		
Presentation was well planned and coherent	10		
PPT frames were well formatted	10		
Presenter provided personal beliefs in a thoughtful manner	10		
Adhered to federal copyright laws in citing sources of information	10		
Provided bibliographic information	10		
<b>Total Possible Points</b>	<b>60</b>		

Rate each category according to the following scale: 9-10 = excellent, 7-8 = very good, 5-6 = good, 3-4 = satisfactory, 1-2 = poor, and 0 = unsatisfactory.

## **Madison Buffalo Jump In-Class Discussion Work Sheet**

What is a buffalo jump, and when and where was it used?

What are the five ecological (e.g., environmental, geographical, geological, biological) components common to most buffalo jumps?

Why was the buffalo important to Plains Indians?

What did its near extermination mean for the Salish and other Plains tribes?"